

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Wedge at 7:00 PM. The following members were present:

Ms. Sylvia Wedge, Chair
Mr. Richard Carpender, V. Chair

Mrs. Cortvriend, Clerk

Mrs. Marge Levesque
Mr. Michael Buddemeyer

Also Present: Dr. Lusi, Asst. Supt. Jermain, Christine Tague, Patti Cofield, Amy Larsen (High School Liaison)

Absent: Mr. Jamie Heaney

1. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: Ms. Wedge asked for a moment of silence in memory of former Middle School Principal, Stephen Desposito.
2. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**: Dr. Lusi stated that a lot of activity has taken place since the last School Committee meeting. She conducted a very successful Administrators' Retreat on August 21st and 22nd at the Hampton Inn Conference Center in Middletown, compliments of Mr. Buddemeyer. The goals of the retreat were to: Appreciate and celebrate our progress by looking at where we've been, where we are now, and where we are going; to continue focusing on instruction by deepening our shared understanding of our responsibilities in improving teaching and learning and monitoring the implementation of instructional programs – focusing particularly on mathematics; to strengthen our work as a leadership team by examining how we need to work together and develop concrete plans for our work as a leadership team; and to attend to some "nuts and bolts."

Dr. Lusi also announced that we had very successful opening days for teachers and students. Ms. Wedge brought greetings to the staff on Orientation Day, and the administrative team entertained them with a "Saturday Night Live" themed skit that was very entertaining. The serious part of the morning focused on how much has been accomplished over the past 3+ years and what a tribute that is to the leadership and professionalism of everyone in our system. This information was presented in a 70-slide Powerpoint presentation, and Dr. Lusi will work on presenting something similar to the School Committee at a future meeting. Dr. Lusi stated that the first day of school went very smoothly, with only a few transportation glitches.

Dr. Lusi reported that she attended a meeting on revising the state's Basic Education Plan (BEP), as a RISSA Representative. The work is changing somewhat, and RIDE is trying to move that work forward at a faster pace. Dr. Lusi's group is becoming a focus group. She will continue to keep the Committee posted on the progress.

Dr. Lusi suggested changing the October 14th meeting to October 7th, since we are not planning to have a second meeting in September, and one Committee member isn't available to attend on October 14th.

- a) Teaching and Learning: Assistant Superintendent Jermain stated that the Professional Development session on the curriculum preview for ELA and math held on August 28th was very well attended by the elementary teachers. Beth Roman and Denise Dvorak led sessions, and Rose Muller and the IT team explained some of the new technology. The draft trimester report card is still being reviewed by teachers. This is being done so that we are in compliance with state reporting and to better inform our families. Mrs. Jermain stated that Staff Orientation was mostly paperless this year, and many documents were available online. The K-5 literacy brochures are available online and will also be available on curriculum night at the elementary schools. Rose Muller and Cathy Nash implemented a Professional Development sign-up system online through Google in an effort to track the dollars spent right down to the classroom level. The teachers are sent an e-mail, which prompts them to sign-up for district and building level professional development activities, and then a detailed spreadsheet is sent to the principals. In addition, the information is submitted to the Rhode Island Department of Education so teachers get credit in their I-Plans. Also available online this year is our Volunteers In Schools application. Mrs. Jermain gave an update on the China visit. She stated that the officials cannot get visas at this time, so they will not be coming in October. The soonest they could come is the first week in December; however, it is possible they may not be able to come until next fall because of the earthquake and their economy. The Rhode Island delegation, of which Mrs. Jermain is a part, is still going to China in April. Lastly, Mrs. Jermain announced that the IT team did an outstanding job on Orientation Day.
- b) Finance and Operations: Ms. Tague reported that she attended a training session at RIDE with Georgiana Murphy and Sharon Allan on the new Chart of Accounts, and she will explain it to the Committee at a future meeting. We have to go live on July 1st, and our goal is to develop the budget process in the new chart of accounts. Mr. Carpender asked if additional help would be needed to handle this work, and Ms. Tague responded that she thinks there will be some difficulty managing this level of data.
- c) High School Liaison: Miss Amy Larsen was introduced as our new High School Liaison by Ms. Wedge. Miss Larsen stated that last Thursday, Freshman Orientation was held outside of school for all freshmen and their parents. Representatives from different clubs, activities, and teams, attended to answer questions. They are trying to get the freshmen onboard with elections next week. The Student Council is starting to plan Homecoming Spirit Week, which is October 14th – 18th. They are hoping to do more charity work this year and have planned a canned food drive that will last all week. The Student Council has a lot of money they would like to use for a recycling project in the cafeteria, and they are hoping to start that in the fall.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Carpender made a motion to approve the minutes of the meetings held July 22, 2008, and August 19, 2008. Seconded by Mrs. Cortvriend. So voted 5-0.

4. **CONSENT AGENDA**

- a) **Dept. Head Resignation.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the School Committee accepts the resignation of Diane Creese from the position of Applied Arts and Sciences Department Head at Portsmouth High School, effective immediately."
- b) **Appt. – Grade 6, .5 Time, PMS.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the Committee affirms the Superintendent's appointment, Recommendation #1-9/9/08, to the position of Grade 6 Teacher, .5 time, at Portsmouth Middle School, for the 2008-09 school year."
- c) **Request for Leave of Absence.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the Committee approves the request for Family and Medical Leave in accordance with the backup information."
- d) **Approval of Requests for Permission to Home School.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the Committee approves the requests to provide home schooling for the 2008-09 school year for students HS#12 through 18-9/08, as listed in the confidential memo dated September 4, 2008, in accordance with the provisions of R.I. Law 16-19-2."

Mr. Carpender made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded by Mrs. Cortvriend. So voted 5-0. Dr. Lusi announced the appointment of Lindsey Phillips to the position of Grade 6 teacher, .5 time, at Portsmouth Middle School.

5. **BUSINESS AGENDA**

Ms. Wedge announced that all items on the Business Agenda, with the exception of Item f), would be discussed but not voted on.

Dr. Lusi stated that she and Patti Cofield met with School Department Attorney, Richard Updegrove, this afternoon regarding the transportation policies. Mr. Updegrove closely reviewed the below policies and made some additions. Therefore, Dr. Lusi suggested that the School Committee takes public comment tonight, and then she would incorporate Mr. Updegrove's changes into the policies and take the public's comments into consideration. She will bring the policies back to the Policy Subcommittee before presenting them to the

School Committee at the next meeting. Portsmouth High School Junior, Andrew Kelly, asked why there are no bus passes this year. Mrs. Levesque explained that we have been providing all of the transportation for students attending birthday parties, etc., and issues have happened in the past. There have been up to 50 students per day at one elementary school riding other busses. She stated that we've also had to tighten up our bus routes because of budget issues. Mr. Kelly stated that on many occasions, students need to attend study sessions with a friend or work on a group project, etc., so they need to take a different bus to the friend's house. He said he's had to take the bus to Little Compton for group projects and doesn't know how he will get there now. He stated that he has done this on Portsmouth busses as well. Mrs. Levesque stated that this policy is more for the younger students. In the lower grades, the students are not responsible for themselves. Dr. Lusi stated that she hadn't heard much regarding bus passes from Portsmouth High School and that this policy change does not impact the Little Compton busses. Mr. Kelly stated that at Portsmouth High School, students get on whatever bus they want to take. Ms. Wedge stated that this would be discussed with Mr. Littlefield. Parent Meggin Smith stated that for working parents, they are having a tough time with the elimination of bus passes. Parents can't get their children to certain activities, so the students take alternate busses to other people's houses to take them. She also stated that she still has to write a note for her daughter to be "picked up" instead of writing a note stating that she is taking a different bus, so administratively, there is no time saved. Dr. Lusi stated that as a working parent of two, she fully understands the convenience of having the bus passes; however, in talking with our school administrators, former guidance counselor, our attorney, and some other superintendents, she thinks moving 50 kids at one school onto other busses potentially every day is excessive. There is even more potential to lose a student when a bus pass is issued. If a child is picked up at school, they are released to an adult that is responsible for them. Mr. Buddemeyer was concerned that the changes in the bus policies would be a financial issue for parents because they would have to pay for 5 days of daycare when they may only need 3 days, for example. Dr. Lusi stated that it is a School Committee decision as to the level of service we provide. We do not have to renegotiate our bus contract until 2010. Mr. Buddemeyer thinks some discretion could be built in. Dr. Lusi stated that if you want to make it more flexible, it has to be really, really clear because it will put us in the position of parsing out what is and isn't okay, etc. Dr. Lusi stated that the School Committee made numerous changes over the past several years regarding busing. Mrs. Cortvriend asked if the subcommittee had discussed servicing the daycare centers. Mrs. Levesque stated that it was discussed but that they would relook at it and take the concerns into account.

- a) **Approval of Policy #5131 – Student Transportation Services, 2nd Reading and Adoption.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the School Committee approves the proposed changes as a second reading and adopts Policy #5131, Student Transportation Services as presented." This item will be presented at the next meeting.

- b) **Approval of Policy #5131.1 – Student Transportation Services, Walkers and Riders, 2nd Reading and Adoption.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, “that the School Committee approves the proposed changes as a second reading and adopts Policy #5131.1, Student Transportation Services, Walkers and Riders, as presented.” This item will be presented at the next meeting.
- c) **Approval of Policy #5131.2 – School Bus Code, 2nd Reading and Adoption.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, “that the School Committee approves the proposed changes as a second reading and adopts Policy #5131.2, School Bus Code, as presented.” This item will be presented at the next meeting.
- d) **Approval of Policy #5131.3 – Transportation Guidelines, 2nd Reading and Adoption.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, “that the School Committee approves the proposed changes as a second reading and adopts Policy #5131.3, Transportation Guidelines, as presented.” This item will be presented at the next meeting.
- e) **Approval of Policy #5131.4 – Video Cameras on School Busses, 2nd Reading and Adoption.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, “that the School Committee approves the proposed changes as a second reading and adopts Policy #5131.4, Video Cameras on School Busses, as presented.” This item will be presented at the next meeting.
- f) **Approval of Policy #4133 – Travel Reimbursement – Private Vehicles, 1st Reading and Adoption.** A motion was made by Mrs. Levesque to approve the proposed changes to Policy #4133, Travel Reimbursement, wave the second reading, and adopt the policy as presented. Seconded by Mr. Carpender. So voted 5-0.
- g) **2008-09 Budget Adjustments.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, “that the School Committee approves the realignment of the bottom line budget allocation of \$34,743,070 as presented.” Ms. Wedge stated that this item would not be voted on this evening. Ms. Tague distributed her memo regarding the revised 2008-09 budget recommendation in the General Fund. Ms. Tague reported that the reallocation is as a result of fine-tuning the budget. The only major change to the original budget presented to the committee is the elimination of the \$168,327 in cuts to be determined, as these cuts were made after the presentation to the Town Council. This budget recommendation still leaves a balance of \$38,757 for further allocation. The total salary variance of \$128,000 is as a result of savings in the salaries of retirees versus the cost of new hires. The reassignment of budget allocations to different classifications within the various line items is due to the movement of positions, i.e. from the local to the regional salary accounts. With the exception of the increase for the facilities study of

\$51,000 and the decrease in the warrant cost of \$73,000, as determined by the Town Finance Director, the rest of the variances are generally not remarkable. The School Department does have a balanced budget as recommended, but the School Committee needs to keep in mind that several budget pressures still exist that could upset the balance. The budget for utilities includes the estimate for the reduction of the wind turbine savings of \$128,000; however, we still don't have the wind turbine. The account for substitute teaching could be another area of exposure because of long-term maternity leaves. This budget also assumes that the "new" state aid that is projected is realized. In addition, one of the biggest unknowns is the assessment from the Newport County Department of Special Education, which is still undetermined. Projected considerations to offset the potential shortfalls in the above-mentioned budget categories are the excess Medicaid money of approximately \$200,000 and existing budgeted line items that may assist in offsetting our risk as well. For example, out-of-district tuition cost for current enrollments is currently \$300,000 under budget. This item will be put on the next agenda for approval.

- h) **FY'09 Financial Update.** Ms. Tague gave an update on FY'09. She distributed the August 31, 2008, revenue and expenditure reports. She stated that since we are two months into the fiscal year, it is too early in the budget cycle to have any significant trends or information to analyze. This will be brought back to the next meeting for a vote.
- i) **Discussion re Strategic Planning.** Dr. Lusi gave an update on Strategic Planning. She stated that she had applied for a grant through the Rhode Island Foundation but was turned down. They have never funded a school system for Strategic Planning, and they were reluctant to do that because it is a requirement for everyone to have an updated Strategic Plan, and they felt they were opening up the door for every district to ask for grants. She is going to try to beseech them to reconsider. She is also applying for a much smaller grant through the Portsmouth Public Education Foundation. She also asked Jan Williams to look closely at the results of our Performance Audit and the data collected for that. She will discuss with Dr. Lusi how we might somewhat reduce the timeline and cost of doing a Strategic Plan. Ms. Williams is coming on October 9th to meet with the Administrative Team. Then we will relook at the budget. We do have some money that is unallocated in our budget that would support this as a 1-time cost.

6. **SUBCOMMITTEE AGENDA**

- a) **Finance.** No report.
- b) **Policy.** Mrs. Levesque will coordinate a meeting within the next few weeks.

c) **GCOC.**

- 1) **Approval of Progress Payment for Gym Mezzanine.** A motion was made by Mrs. Cortvriend to approve the progress payment dated 7/31/08, in the amount of \$94,640, to Alhambra Building Company for the High School Gym Mezzanine Project. Seconded by Mr. Carpender. So voted 5-0.
- 2) **Approval of Progress Payment for Gym Mezzanine.** A motion was made by Mrs. Cortvriend to approve the progress payment dated 9/2/08, in the amount of \$176,750, to Alhambra Building Company for the High School Gym Mezzanine Project. Seconded by Mr. Carpender. So voted 5-0.

Mrs. Cortvriend stated that she and Ms. Wedge took a tour of the mezzanine last week, and it looks good. They are waiting on some long lead items. The floor needs to be put down in October. Dr. Lusi stated that a tour could be arranged for the School Committee members. We will also have the Gym Committee do a walk-through. Mrs. Cortvriend stated that we are aware that there are some missing red bricks, and she and Ms. Wedge developed a report. Mr. Davidson will meet with the vendor, Warren Monument, to fix the issue.

- d) **Facilities.** Mr. Buddemeyer stated that RGB has been conducting facilities tours. The next Facilities Committee meeting will be held on October 3rd.

Ms. Wedge stated that the next meeting will be held on October 7, 2008 (location to be determined).

Mr. Carpender made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Mrs. Cortvriend. So voted 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Patti Cofield
Recording Secretary for

Terri Cortvriend, Clerk